

Crossroads

THE MAGAZINE

SPRING 2002



In Your Own Backyard

PERSONALITIES

Area foster parents tell what it takes; Joplin's own Dr. Dolittle.

EXPRESSIONS

Two local artists, two different views; An acting tradition.

ATTRACTIONS

Old relic offers new adventures; Downtown Springfield revived.

MISSOURI SOUTHERN STATE COLLEGE

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IN YOUR OWN BACKYARD

MISSOURI SOUTHERN STATE COLLEGE



Table of Contents



4 People

5 What It Takes Foster parents give their all.

9 Youth Outreach Ministers reach out to area teen-agers.

12 Serving Up Style Carol Parker cooks up four-state flavor.

15 Loving Kindness Local woman loves her variety of pets.

19 Veteran of the Trade Old-fashioned craft stays in high demand.



22 The Arts

23 Art With a Higher Purpose Artist spreads the gospel on canvas.

27 Another Man's Treasure Southern artist produces art from junk.

32 Joplin Little Theatre Joplin tradition acts as mind-opener.



36 Places

37 Prairie State Park Bison roam on the range.

41 Old School Prospers Sleeping in school becomes more enjoyable.

44 Squaw Creek National refuge is for the birds.

47 An Eclectic Selection Heading South proves enjoyable for all walks.



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In your own backyard

Missouri Southern State College

A note from the editor

In keeping with the strong global focus Missouri Southern has had on education, many recent issues of *Crossroads: The Magazine* centered around international studies.

While the *Crossroads* staff agrees Southern's international mission is important, the general consensus was to take a break.

This issue, "In Your Own Backyard," *Crossroads* shifted from a global focus in order to take time to reflect on the places and happenings close to home.

Granted, the Joplin regional area is not one famous for its architecture or landmarks, as are some of the cities highlighted in previous issues, nor does the area have a history that dates back hundreds of years. However, despite the humdrum traits that typically characterize the area, a closer look reveals much heritage, and an open mind will even allow a glimpse into the unique places connected by roads crisscrossing the state.

As this issue of *Crossroads* reveals, this region possesses a rich history, beautiful sights, and interesting and genuinely good people.

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Front Cover: Photographed and designed by Shanna Torrez.

PEOPLE



WHAT IT TAKES



YOUTH OUTREACH



SERVING UP STYLE



LOVING KINDNESS



VETERAN OF THE TRADE

What It Takes

By Natosha Rogers



Shanna Torrez

(Above) Chelsea helps her father clean up after dinner. The entire family pitches in to help.

(Below) The Finn family enjoys dinner at the kitchen table.

Foster parenting is not something people conventionally become involved with, but for Pam Finn, it was almost thrown into her lap.

"I drove a pretty tough bus route and I had a parent kick her 14-year-old daughter out of the house," she said. "She told me to take her daughter, that she didn't want to ever see her again. So, I took this girl and had her for a couple of years."

Before Finn became a foster parent, she worked three different jobs. On the weekends, she worked in the day care at the Olympic Fitness Center. Through the week, she worked part time in a doctor's office and part time driving a school bus.

Being a foster parent is not the usual full-time job. But after making a 15-year commitment, a person's life becomes structured around it. Finn, along with her husband Tim, have dedicated their lives to being foster parents. Forty-two foster children have filtered through their home, ranging in age from newborn to 19 years old. The Division of Family Services now

considers the Joplin couple Master Foster Parents.

The Finns have taken numerous classes on foster parenting. They started with the required classes people take to become foster parents, which 15 years ago were called Nova classes. They also have taken many behavioral classes, career-level classes, adoption classes, and Stars "train the trainers" classes. They now mentor new foster parents.

Finn said the classes are much better today.

"For the last seven years, we have taught classes," she said. "When we first took them, they weren't very informative. No one really informed us of what we were getting into, so we thought we were just going to get those sweet, innocent kids."

Finn said as teachers, they make sure all the new parents know what they might have to deal with.

All the rules and regulations of being a foster parent can be somewhat complicated. The DFS conducts extensive back-



ground checks with families wanting to become foster parents. It also sends specialists to the homes and to inspect the family setting. Joyce York, a foster parenting licensing specialist with the Jasper County DFS, helps maintain records on foster parents, gives licensing and approval, matches children with the right home, checks on how many children are in each home, and assists parents with any problems. York knows about all the guidelines of foster parenting, and works regularly with Finn.

"Pam is a Master Foster Parent and she does training for us," York said. "There is a new program we are working on that deals with taking children out of foster care and placing them with relatives. Pam gives four classes a month to the relatives. She educates them on the court system, juvenile offices, and behavioral problems that they may deal with."

At the front door of the Finn home lays a rug which reads, "Home Is Where The Heart Is." Inside, this statement stands true. The Finns have two biological children, now grown and out of the house, and three adopted children.

Their youngest son, 5-year-old Toby, yelled from the other room and Finn gave him her full attention.

He skated into the kitchen with his roller blades on the wrong feet, and his mother told him to fix his skates.

From behind his tiny glasses, his bright eyes lit up as Toby said, "Mom, these are too loose."

Finn helped put his skates on the right feet.

After he left the room, she said, "He was the only one we've ever brought home from the hospital."

Toby's biological mother left him at the hospital and no one knew where she was for four months. Finn looked down and her voice lowered.

"You would think that anyone who gave birth to a baby would just naturally love it," she said. "It's sad, but we have seen people who just don't have that nurturing ability."

Finn's motherly pride shows.

"Toby has a slight case of Down syndrome," she said.

"But, he does everything that the doctors told us he would probably never do. He



Shanna Torrez

(Above) Kimberly relaxes in her room, where she can get peace and quiet while reading a science book.

(Below) Toby checks out the details of his Hot Wheels car while taking a break from racing it around his new track.



Shanna Torrez

walks, and talks, and can see, and he is very bright."

When the Finns receive new children into their home, they make the children feel welcome. When they go on vacations, all the children go along, too. The Finns also have a cabin at the lake where they spend time during the summer with all the children.

In the backyard of the home is a swimming pool and a large trampoline. In all five bedrooms of the house is a stereo, a television, a VCR, and some type of video game system. Their basement is filled with toys, pictures, and about every Disney movie ever made.

Finn showed off her pictures mounted on the wall. Besides one of Finn and her husband, there is at least one picture of each of the children.

The most children they have in their home at one time is eight. While sitting at the eight-person kitchen table, Finn described her daily routine.

"I get up and get six kids ready for school every morning," she said. "I go to counseling appointments, doctor appointments, and court appointments. I also often go and visit new foster parents and try to help them understand the system."

Even with the busy schedule of a foster parent, Finn still finds it a rewarding lifestyle.

"It is especially rewarding when you can send a kid home and it's a successful thing," she said. "When the family is all back together and everything has worked out, it's a real good feeling."

On Sundays, the Finn home is busy.

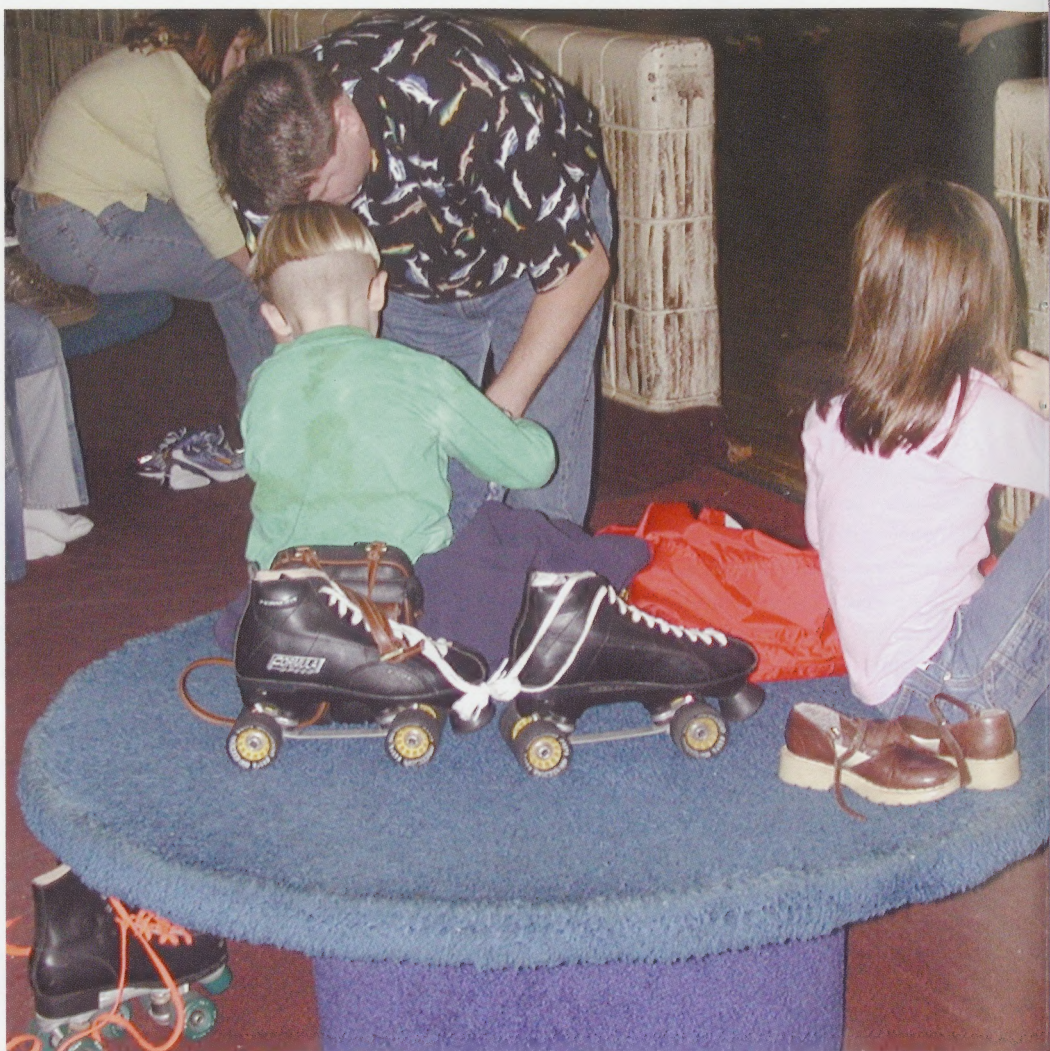
"We usually have at least 30 people here every Sunday," Finn said.

Many of the foster children they have kept, at one time or another, come and visit on Sundays. The Finns also receive many visitors on the holidays.

Finn does find a couple of things to be difficult when it comes to foster parenting.

"The hardest thing for me to deal with is drugs," she said. "We've been through Scott Greening Center with many kids, and drugs are a horrible thing. Tim and I always have to worry that none of our kids will be tempted by that child that has a drug issue."

Another obstacle they must overcome in their parenting is, "finding the kids the



John and Pam Finn help the children lace up their skates before rolling onto the rink at Silver Wheels. The Finns enjoy taking the children out and having a good time.

kind of help they really need."

As foster parents, they must decide what type of counseling the children should go to and what kind of support they need.

Cheryl Mayo, a licensed professional counselor at College View Counseling Center, works with many foster children.

"Foster children can be more of a challenge because they have been thrown out of the only place they call home," Mayo said. "Many of the children have a hard time adjusting, and they feel like they've done something wrong, and that this is their fault."

Mayo works closely with DFS workers, and she attends some of the monthly meetings with the children and their families.

"I try to get the children to talk a lot

about their family of origin," Mayo said. "I ask them what they miss the most, what they liked, and what they didn't like at home."

She also works some with the foster parents.

"I try to help them become more sensitive to what the children might do, and trusting the children can be challenging," Mayo said.

While Finn is faced with these challenges every day, she learns more and more.

"You must be strong and family-oriented," she said.

"You have to be a team player.

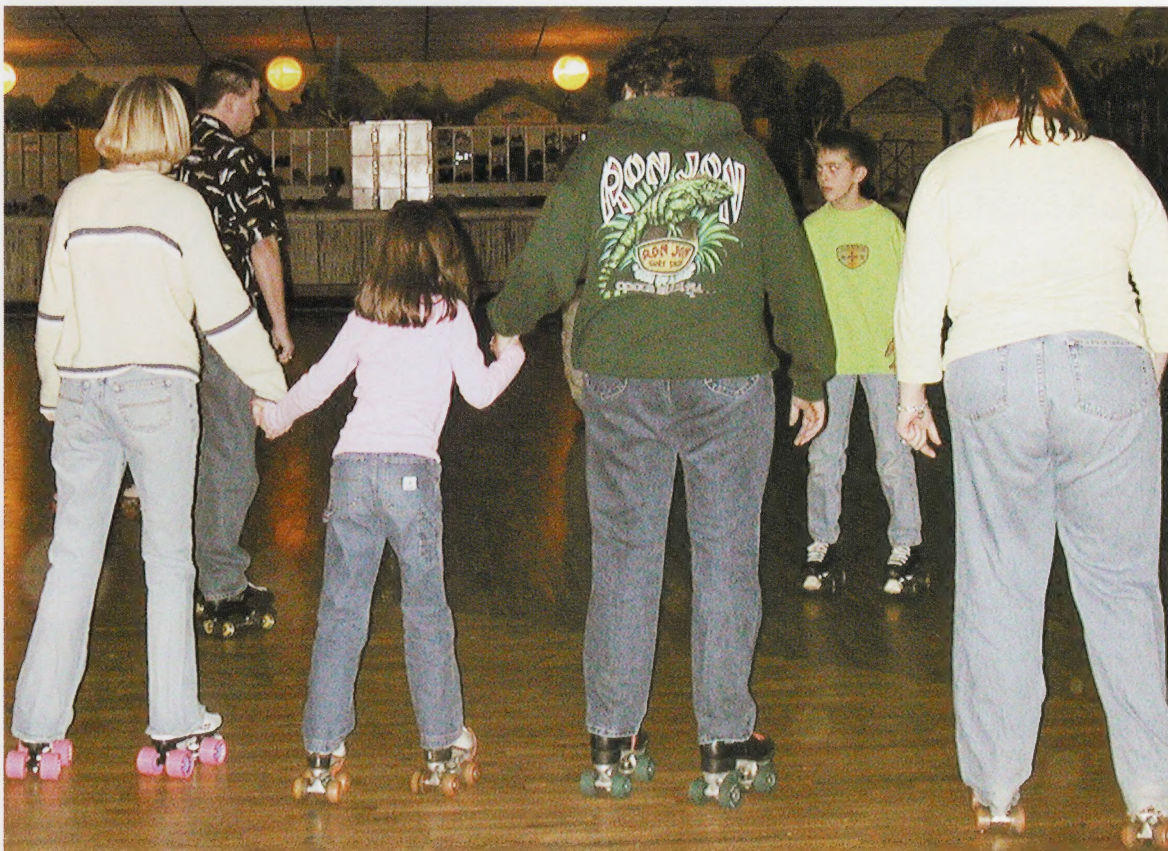
"What I do takes lots of communication and patience."



Natosha Rogers



Shanna Torrez



Natosha Rogers

(Above) Pam helps Toby read Dr. Suess' *Green Eggs and Ham* before bedtime. Toby turns the pages faster than she can read them. (Left) Pam and Chelsea try to teach one of their neighbor friends to skate, while the rest of the family skates around them.

YOUTH GOSPEL

Ministers Make Teen Connection

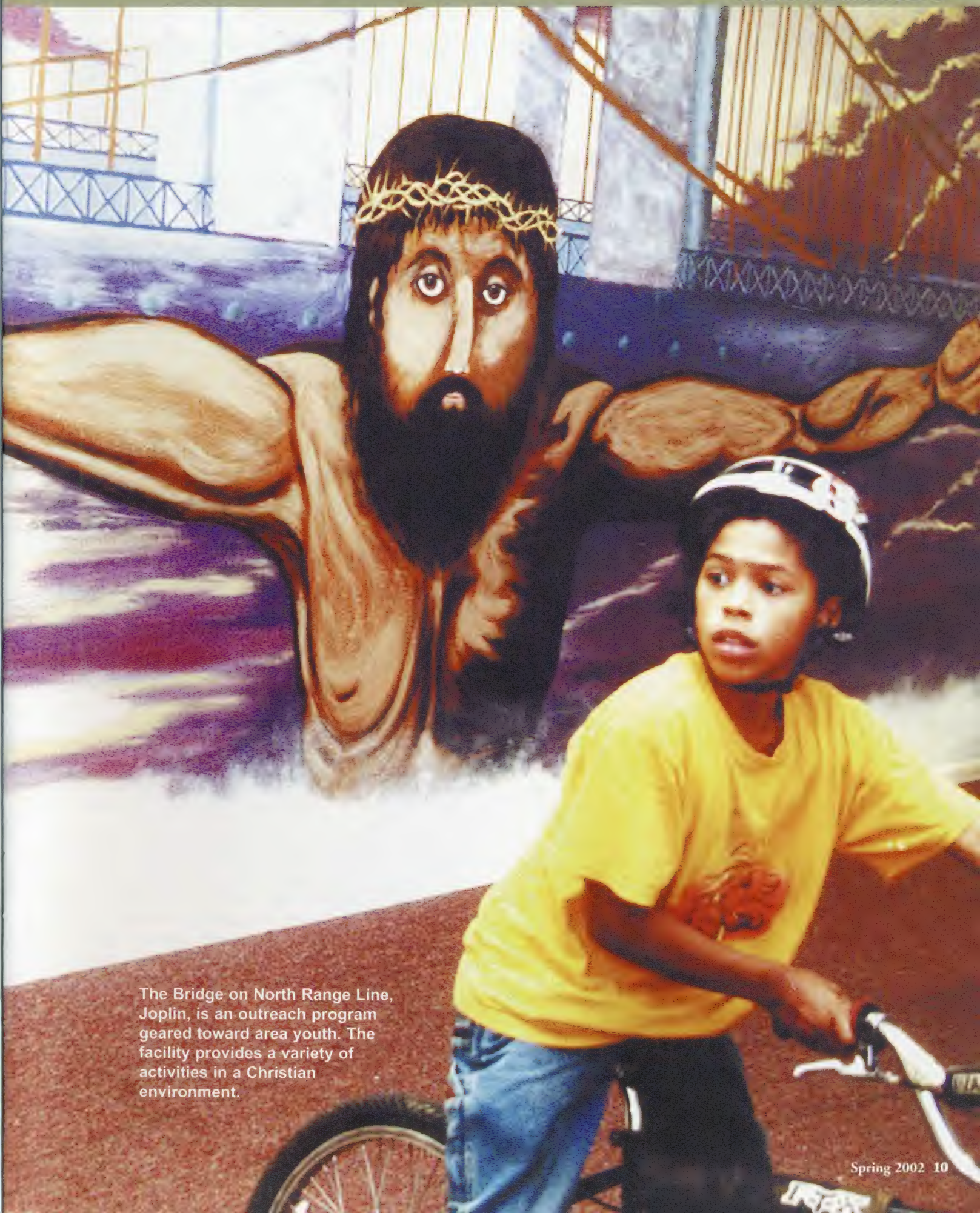
Story and Photography by Dale Benfield, Jr.

There are many organizations and programs geared toward youth outreach in the community.

Greg Stone, Joplin area director of Young Life, an outreach organization directed toward high school students, defined outreach as adults going where the youth hang out.

"I call it youth outreach mission work because we are entering a different culture, the teen-age culture," Stone said. "Outreach means getting out of our comfort zones to identify with the struggles and stresses of adolescence. The only effective way to do that is to meet them where they are (ball games, school functions, the mall, pool hall, etc.)."

Shane Munn, senior business major at Missouri Southern and youth director at Calvary Baptist Church said to get in with teens, "you've got to be a fool for Christ."



The Bridge on North Range Line, Joplin, is an outreach program geared toward area youth. The facility provides a variety of activities in a Christian environment.



A Young Life area director ministers to a group of teen-agers during a meeting at SharpTop Cove Camp, Georgia.

Stone said some effective strategies in reaching out to teens include:

- Being with youth in their environment. There really are no shortcuts.
- Be in their environment on a consistent basis, at least weekly.
- When meeting with youth, meet their friends through them.
- Ask them questions about themselves. Don't spend much time talking about yourself. Find out their interests and talk about those interests.
- Seek to do things with them. Build memories and relationships through shared experiences. This is the key.
- Pray, pray, pray for the youth you meet.
- Remember names. Do whatever it takes to make this happen.
- Be yourself.

According to those who do this as a profession, there are certain obstacles one must overcome to effectively outreach to youth.

"The hardest obstacle to reaching out to youth is yourself, your fears, and perceived inadequacies," Stone said. "Another obsta-

cle is busyness. It is easy to choose your schedule and your agenda over spending time with kids, because you can always spend time with kids later.

"Another obstacle is sin in your life. If you are trying to do ministry with kids, and yet you are not walking with Christ and spending daily time with him, you will soon find yourself hating what you are doing, and kids will see that. As Howard Hendricks says, 'Before God can minister through you, he must minister to you.'"

Stone said the purpose for outreach is to show Jesus Christ.

"Young Life is about sharing Jesus with young people," he said. "We do that through incarnational ministry — entering their world and being with them, building friendships to 'earn the right' to share God's love for them. Outreach is how it is done. There are no shortcuts."

He finds many rewards in his occupation.

"My most rewarding experience in reaching out to youth is seeing those same youth years later reaching out to other

youth," Stone said. "It doesn't get better than that."

Though it is not always obvious that connections and good decisions are being made, Munn encourages those in youth outreach to not be discouraged.

"Many times we see a seed planted, but don't always get to watch it grow," Munn said. "We are only direction signs, pointing the way to the Lord, we leave the rest up to him."

Though teen-agers may seem uninterested at times, Stone believes they all want to be reached.

"I really think all youth want to be reached out to, whether they admit it or not, or whether they realize it or not," he said.

"All of us desire to be loved, accepted and cared for with no strings attached. Many of the youth we reach out to have been burned so bad in relationships that they have protective walls up. For them, it just takes a lot longer to earn their trust. Maybe we never earn their trust, but maybe we can help knock down some of the blocks of their wall."

Carol



Noppadol Paothong

Parker

Serving Up Style

By Bill Shepherd

It's hard to picture a person more in touch with the four-state area. Her winning smile and personality make her a celebrity among many area residents.

Broadcast journalist, Carol Parker, community affairs director for KSN-TV, has touched almost everyone in the four-state area. She has been communicating to viewers in their living rooms for 29 years. Parker shows her vigor for life and desire

to help people through her special way of communication.

Jim Jackson, main anchor and executive producer, has worked with Parker for 22 years.

"She is the nicest, the nicest person you will ever meet or work with," he said. "What you see on TV is what you get in person. She is just a joy to work with."

Jackson said Parker has a great sense of

humor and has fun at what she does.

"I have seldom seen her get upset over anything, she never loses her cool," he said.

Jackson said Parker participates in various community activities separate from the newsroom.

"You name it, she's always there," he said.

Parker has been working with the com-



munity her entire broadcast career, but that's not how she got started in the business. She started looking toward the stars as a dancer and actor in community plays when she was 14.

During high school, she was a dance assistant to her cousin and best friend, Janet Weidman, who owned a dance school. Weidman said Parker has talent and has been in many theater productions.

"Carol's good...and she's a really good actress, but she never pursued it much," Weidman said.

Parker taught dancing at her own studio in Galena, Kan., while attending Joplin High School and receiving a two-year degree from Joplin Junior College, now Missouri Southern. After graduation, she decided to take a vacation to Hollywood to visit her cousin. On a whim, they thought they would try out for a central casting company. The casting company picked

four dancers, and Parker and Weidman landed a job in the movies.

"I ended up staying in California, and working as an extra in dancing, in the movie *There's No Business Like Show Business*, and I got to work with Marilyn Monroe and Ethel Merman, big stars," Parker said.

She had her foot in the door in Hollywood with a contract working for 20th Century Fox, but became homesick and returned to Joplin during a two-week vacation between movies. Parker said Hollywood was glamorous at first, but after about three months, she decided it wasn't for her.

Parker returned to college at the University of Arkansas. In 1957 while on a break from college, Parker married Jack Parker.

She said her husband has always offered encouragement and travels with Parker on

her numerous assignments.

"My husband has really given me great support and been my biggest fan over the years," Parker said.

Jack Parker said they enjoy doing everything together.

"She is the world's greatest wife," he said. "She is pleasant to be around all the time."

The couple had three children, and Parker enjoyed life as a housewife until opportunity knocked again.

Parker was offered an interview at KSN-TV while dancing in the Joplin Centennial play *Let's Take A Step*. Parker had been a guest on Virginia Hickey's show, "News and Views." Hickey was retiring and the station asked Parker for an interview. She soon began working and had guests five days a week. Parker said her best advice came from Hickey.

"She said, 'I'll give you one word of



Submitted Photo

(Clockwise From Left) Carol Parker has been a regular at KSN-TV for 29 years. Actor Dennis Weaver, a fellow alumni member, appeared on Parker's show. Parker and her husband, Jack, have hosted several Travel Planners' trips. Tri-Statesmen Chorus, a local group, visited Parker at the KSN studio.



Submitted Photo



Submitted Photo

advice, just listen to what they say, that's all you have to do, it's easy because you'll respond," Parker said. "I thought that was the best advice I ever had."

Parker has been hostess of "The Carol Parker Show" since 1973. Besides her shows, Parker's job at KSN is to interview guests and celebrities and to get involved and announce anything going on in the four-state community. She currently has guests twice a week on "Taste of the Town" on Tuesdays, and "Cooking with Carol" on Thursdays, and covers Hollywood on "Hollywood Buzz" at 5 p.m. on Fridays. Parker also does a variety of commercials and freelance work. For 15 years she has volunteered to host the Children's Miracle Network Telethon.

"I really enjoy doing it and giving back to the community," Parker said "It's one of the highlights of what I do."

During her time at KSN, she has pub-

lished three cookbooks, received "Woman of Achievement for Contribution in Communication" from the March of Dimes, and been honored with a Carol Parker Day at the Galena Days Celebration.

She currently serves on the advisory board for the American Red Cross, March Of Dimes, the Area Agency on Aging, and the Joplin Little Theatre. Parker said she wouldn't want to live anywhere else but the Ozarks, and loves her job.

"It's different every day," she said.

One of her most exciting times was when Silver Dollar City sent her on trips to New York City to attend the Radio City Christmas in August spectacular. While there, Parker interviewed the Radio City Rockettes and did promotion tapes for KSN at the NBC studios in New York City. She said she'd never forget the promos with Al Roker and Matt Lauer. Parker still

gets excited around celebrities.

Her hobbies include walking and going to plays. As an alumna, Parker enjoys the activities offered at Southern. She said health, health of all her relatives, and happiness are the most important things to her.

Weidman said Parker has always been friendly to everyone.

"She has interviewed everyone who has ever come through Joplin," Weidman said. "She's a good representative of Joplin."

Jackson said Parker's smile and positive attitude has rubbed off on him and the young people around the studio.

"She is a good role model for young ladies of any age," he said. "Really, I mean, she just has a good attitude about what she does, and I think that reflects on people around her. She is a natural at what she does."

Parker wouldn't change anything about her job.

"I love it, I love it," Parker said.

Loving Kindness

Story by Natosha Rogers

Photography by Noppadol Paothong

Animals are interesting creatures. They think, they get confused, and they get angry like humans. Some people think animals can understand humans. And some humans think they can understand animals.

Terri Bealmear, Joplin, has loved animals for a long time. She has dogs, a cat, fish, a pig, a tame wild turkey, and numerous birds.

The mixture of species, for the most part, get along.

"Most of them pretty well do, or they at least have their place of tolerance," Bealmear said. "The cats don't chase the birds, and the dogs don't chase the cats. Everyone's in harmony."

Surprisingly, almost all of these animals came to or were brought to Bealmear because they were sick or hurt.

"They kind of came to me one by one," she said. "Now when a new animal comes to my home injured, all the others kind of know, and they watch it and worry about it."

Bealmear has been drawn to nature since a young age. She remembers sitting out in the woods as a child while animals approached her.

"I had wild squirrels, rabbits, and even skunks come and lay at my feet when they would get hurt," Bealmear said. "I would find them waiting outside the back door for me sometimes, and even before I had any medical animal training, somehow I could fix them."





Terri Bealmear kisses her beloved turkey, Galderon. She took him into her home because he needed somewhere safe to live. "We bonded right away and he became friends with all the others," Bealmear said.



(Left) Terri Bealmear performs a dental procedure on Suski, who has a bad tooth that needs to be removed before it gets infected. **(Right)** After Chiquita's bath, Bealmear wraps her in a dry towel. On average, it takes Bealmear 20 to 30 minutes to bathe and dry each dog.

Bealmear worked with Project Wildlife in Overland Park, Calif. The organization rehabilitated animals and sent them back into the wild. Once, a hawk landed at her feet. It had been shot in the wing and was infected.

"I literally picked him up, took him inside my house, and I taped him to the kitchen table," Bealmear said. "I did surgery on his wing and kept him for about a week. Then I turned him over to the rehabilitation center. I've always had animals work with me like that from the time that I can remember."

Also while living in California, Bealmear enjoyed fishing. While fishing, she would see young pelicans go under the pier and grab fish.

"The pelicans would get the line and the hook along with the fish a lot of times," Bealmear said. "I noticed that if I started talking to them and had a little bait, they would let me come up to them and pick them up and take off the hooks and line."

Animals have always been around Bealmear and her family. She believes the animals are paying her a compliment when they know and trust her.

"We've had an interesting life, with some interesting critters around us," Bealmear said. "My kids like animals, they're just not crazy about them like I am. But, I see that my grand-



(Above) Blue, a 4-month-old Siamese, stares at a Beta fish. He can spend hours watching and teasing the fish.

(Right) Galderon and Todles, a 7-month-old Great Pyrennes, have learned to respect each other. All the animals, even the younger ones, learn to tolerate their differences.

(Far Right) Harley, a 7-year-old Vietnamese potbelly pig, is the odd one of the group. Bealmear says he "marches to the beat of his own little drummer."



daughter has that relationship with animals like I do."

Bealmear has had many interesting incidents happen throughout her life. She has had two amazing encounters with wild coyotes and wolves. Bealmear has some Native American friends who live out in the country. One night, her friends had a powwow, and warned everyone that there were wolves in the area. They said to just not bother the wolves and they would leave the people alone.

"When we got there, I came down the hillside and three white wolves came down and sat really close to me," Bealmear said. "Two of them wouldn't let me touch them, but the oldest one laid at my feet and let me pet him. It was so neat."

Another incident was when one of Bealmear's friends called her and told her she had a female wolf who was having a hard time delivering her pups. She wanted Bealmear to come over and help the wolf.

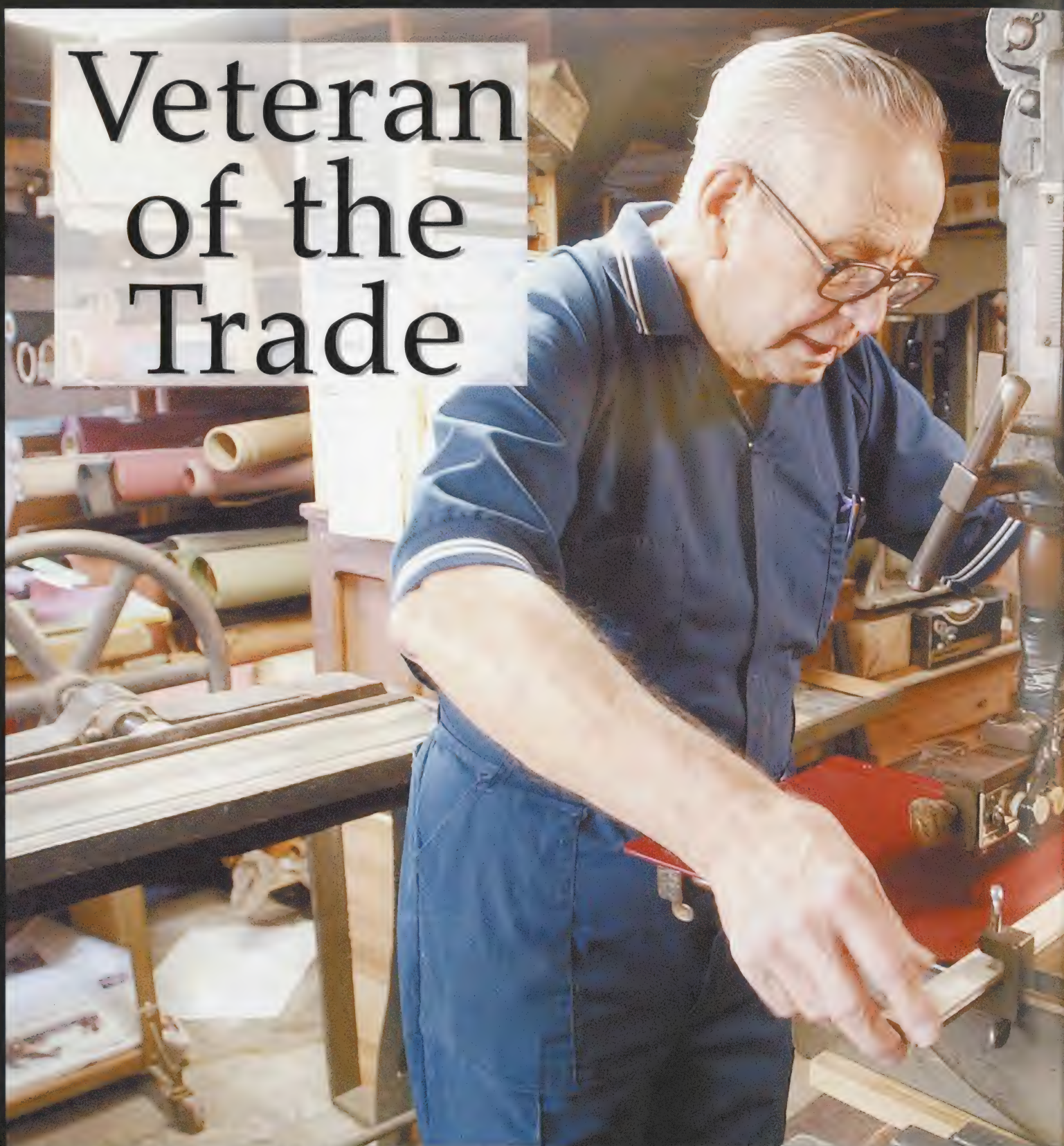
"I was scared at first," Bealmear said. "With her being in so much pain, I was afraid she might take my arm off. I delivered all 13 of her pups, and it went smooth. It was one of the neatest experiences I've ever had in my life."

People may wonder why Bealmear is not a veterinarian or zoologist. She loves animals, and she obviously has some kind of connection with them.

"I wish I would've gone to school years ago, but now I feel it's too late," Bealmear said. "I missed my calling. That's what I should have done, what I should have been."



Veteran of the Trade



Local resident has hands that bind.

By Bill Shepherd



Noppadol Paithong

Ralph Drennan sizes a book cover. Drennan performs every step of the book-binding process by hand.

More an artist than anything else, Ralph Drennan, bookmaker and restorer, has been plying in his craft for 65 years. A miniature door leads into the small basement shop of his Joplin home. The contents inside would make any artist or craftsman envious.

Methodically located in the cramped space are materials for making and restoring books of all kinds, shapes, and sizes. Leather, paper, cardboard, and other miscellaneous items line the shelves and corners. Vintage, thick, steel tools used for making books barely fit in the space and allow just enough room to work. The large tools seem massive in the tiny basement, and Drennan said most are antiques more than 60 years old.

Drennan, a Joplin native, was born in 1917 and graduated from Joplin High School. Drennan learned his trade after high school while working for Joplin Printing Company.

"I started my apprenticeship in 1937, in the book binding business," Drennan said. "Then, you had to take a four-year apprenticeship to learn your trade. I learned the trade at Joplin Printing Company and was there for 25 years."

While working as a printer, the draft called Drennan into service during World War II from 1943 to 1946. In Europe, he fought as an infantry mortar platoon leader and received awards during the war. He considers his greatest accomplishments to be the two battlefield commissions he received from 1st Lieutenant to 2nd Lieutenant, and 2nd Lieutenant to Captain, and his Purple Heart, Silver Star, and Bronze Star.

After returning from the war, Drennan resumed working for Joplin Printing Company. His last 10 years there, he worked as plant supervisor in charge of printing, bookbinding, photocopying, and managing the work force. Drennan left Joplin Printing Company in 1965 to start his own business at home making books, bookbinding, and pen ruling.

Drennan makes books from the raw materials he buys. He does everything from picking the color of the book to gold letter stamping the leather covers.

Friend and founder of Dixie Printing Company, Woody Jensen, carpooled with Drennan for more than 15 years while they worked together at Joplin Printing Company.

"He is very good, he is top of the line in what he does in the restoration of books," Jensen said. "I call him a bookbinder expert because that's what he is."

Jensen said Drennan has bound books for Dixie Printing, and there are not many people doing this work anymore.

Drennan said of the books he's made, the county record books are the ones he's most proud of over the years.

"I still do pen ruling because, like Jasper County, Newton County, McDonald County, they still keep these county record books, and they're pen ruled and bound and put on 100 percent rag paper, and they'll last 100 years," Drennan said. "I do the pen ruling and the sewing and the folding and the binding. I've done thousands over the years."

Drennan said pen ruling is applying the colored lines that cross the paper. He begins the process by ruling the paper. He then folds and binds the paper by sewing the sheets together. The cardboard for the cover is cut and bound to the sheets of



Noppadol Paotthong

Ralph Drennan demonstrates a vintage pen ruling machine that was used to apply lines to county record books. Computerization has replaced this kind of work. The local craftsman has been binding books for 65 years.

paper. A piece of leather is glued to the cardboard to form the cover. The last process is to stamp the titles on the book.

Connie Narrell, Drennan's daughter, remembers helping her father in the garage while he did the pen ruling.

"I used to sit at the end of the ruling machine and feed it one sheet of paper at a time," she said. "It's kind of a dying art. He's very patient on his work. He has to do everything just right."

Narrell described her father as being kind of a quiet person who's easy to get along with.

"He's always been a good dad," Narrell said. "He's liked by everyone. I don't suppose he ever made anyone mad."

Drennan also restores old books, especially Bibles. Old Bibles are the most frequently restored books he works on.

Today, things are all printed by computer, and printers don't restore books any-

more. Drennan receives books from all over for restoration.

"I get them from all over the country, like last year, I've had them from California, Washington, Colorado, Iowa,

and of course Kansas, Oklahoma, and Missouri," he said. "Oh, I just get them from all over the country. I don't really advertise, but my customers tell everybody around them, and pretty soon you're getting all kinds of work."

Drennan has bound issues for Missouri Southern's newspaper, *The Chart*, since 1985. Dr. Chad Stebbins, adviser to *The Chart* and director of international studies, has Drennan bind *The Chart* in a different color of leather every year.

"I've always given him the copies and he would put them into a nice book," Stebbins said. "He's about the only one still doing this for individuals who want things bound."

Drennan spends free time fishing, golfing, and doing church work. He loves to work on books every day and enjoys reading history, novels as well as the newspaper each morning.

"I don't really advertise, but my customers tell everybody around them, and pretty soon you're getting all kinds of work."

THE ARTS



ART WITH A PURPOSE



ANOTHER MAN'S TREASURE



JOPLIN LITTLE THEATRE

Art with a Higher Purpose

By Cameron Bohannon

Nowadays, especially here in the Bible Belt, many often complain of the violence and hate portrayed in movies, music, and art.

But Jack Dawson, local artist and Missouri Southern alumnus, is on an artistic mission to stand up for the values he believes in such as family and faith.

"In contrast to the confusing culture around us, it is my desire to express a counteraction: a personal faith in God and application of his principles," Dawson said.

Dawson's works often portray images of colorful landscapes with a nostalgic, Ozark flavor reminiscent of days gone by. Many of his paintings illustrate a Biblical teaching.

"The artwork stems from early expressions of faith," he said. "I like to show solid values which I believe are scripturally based."

Dawson's most well-known and visible work, the "Praying Hands," has become a local landmark. The statue, which depicts two hands folded together in prayer, is more than 30 feet tall and took almost two years to complete. It can be seen at King Jack Park in Webb City.

Many of the themes in Dawson's paintings are more subtle than

the "Praying Hands" and contain hidden images, such as the face of Christ in a cliffside, as depicted in "Majesty." Dawson uses these images to demonstrate that Biblical values must be sought after in order to be obtained.

"If you probe far enough, if you look in the right direction, you'll find the truth that is unchanging, a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ," Dawson said.

Just as with the images in his paintings, Dawson said once this "truth" is seen, viewers realize it was there all along, and will never again appear to be hidden.

Dawson said one purpose of his art is to give viewers an honest challenge.

"All I can do is point in a direction and say 'You might want to look,'" he said. "You may not agree with it, but you know what it stands for."

Dawson said he hopes viewers are able to draw encouragement from the simple, direct messages of his art.

"What makes it all worthwhile is when you challenge the mind and touch the heart," Dawson said.

"I'm encouraged if people are able to take away a message that adds value and purpose to their life."



Submitted Photo



Noppadol Paothong



Noppadol Paothong

(Far Left) A crowd gathers around the "Praying Hands" in Webb City on the National Day of Prayer. Dawson said the "Praying Hands" is a uniter because all people of faith pray.

(Left) Dawson poses with the first of many paintings in a series titled "River of Life."

(Above) Dawson at work in his studio.

(Right) Title: "Serenity"
Medium: Oil on canvas
Size: 20 x 24 inches





(Left) Title: "Penitentiary Bend"

Medium: Oil on canvas

Size: 24 x 36 inches

(Part of the "River of Life" series)

(Right) Title: "Majesty"

Medium: Oil on canvas

Size: 24 x 36 inches



(Left) Title: "Someday"

Medium: Oil on canvas

Size: 48 x 60 inches

(Right) Title: "Eagle's Wings"

Medium: Oil on canvas

Size: 24 x 36 inches

(Far Right) Title: "Peace In the Midst of the Storm"

Medium: Acrylic on Masonite panel

Size: 24 x 30 inches



Another Man's Treasure

Southern artist finds creative uses for 'junk.'

By Cameron Bohannon

When the average person hears the term “art supplies,” images of typical media — oils, acrylics, clay, — usually come to mind.

But for local artist Andrew McCormick, the term implies a much broader array of materials.

McCormick, a Missouri Southern sophomore studio art major, said he creates art by “collecting junk and putting it together.”

McCormick began collecting this “junk” — toys, old jewelry, tools, circuit boards, and various other items one could find in a garage or at a flea market — when he played at his grandmother’s house as a child.

“My grandma would let me go through their basement where she had all kinds of old stuff, jars full of different crap,” he said.

McCormick keeps the items he finds at flea markets, hardware stores, and his grandmother’s house until he finds the right place for them in a work of art.

“I collect junk because I like it, but it’s always there to make art with when I want it,” he said.

In addition to being made of obscure media, McCormick’s works are also difficult to interpret or assign with an exact meaning.

McCormick said sex, violence, people, and raw emotion fuel his inspiration for the art he creates.

“I don’t know if it comes out when you



Title:
“Gladys”
Medium:
Mixed media

Danielle Bash

*"I'm just
a student
trying to become
an artist."*

see it, but that's what drives me," McCormick said.

"I know what my art means to me, but not for a viewer. I try to make interesting art. Hopefully it will grab your attention and generate ideas. You can take it at face value, or you can take out of it what you want."

McCormick, influenced by other artists and the images he sees while studying their works, holds to the belief that all art is merely a re-creation of something that has already been done.

"If you think you're creating something out of nowhere, you're lying," he said.

McCormick said all of the art he makes is a different take on other images he has seen.

"Other artists, life, images, all of it, it percolates around in your head and then 'skorts' back out in other forms," McCormick said.

His sculpture instructor, Dewane Hughes, assistant professor of art, said McCormick has set a direction when it comes to applying himself to his work.

"Right now [McCormick is] more focused on developing and maturing rather than professional achievement," Hughes said.

Hughes is also a source of inspiration for McCormick.

"He's unlike any professor I've had," McCormick said. "I've learned a lot about art from him, but I can also relate to him on a personal level."

McCormick is proud he has found direction in art and for how much he has learned so far.

The aspiring art student plans to keep learning as much as possible so he can "appreciate what's been done before."

"I'd say I haven't become an artist yet," McCormick said. "I'm just a student trying to become an artist."

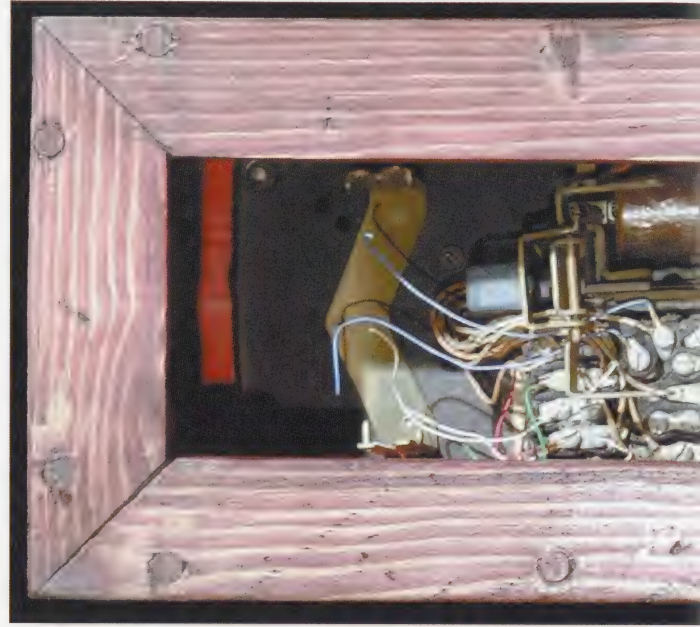
Untitled
Medium:
Mixed media



Danielle Bash



Submitted Photo

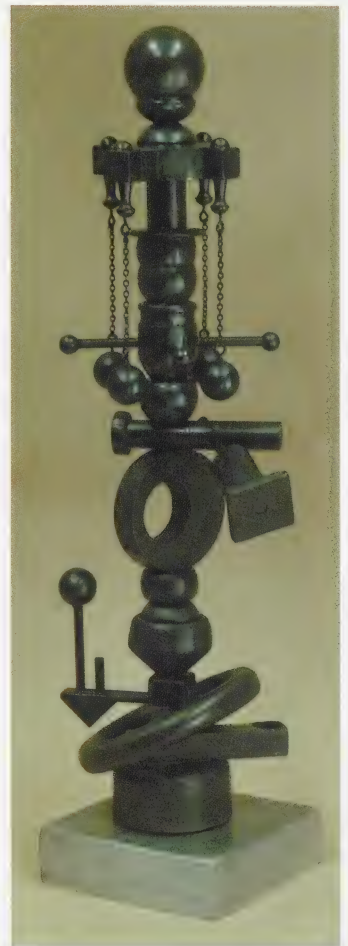




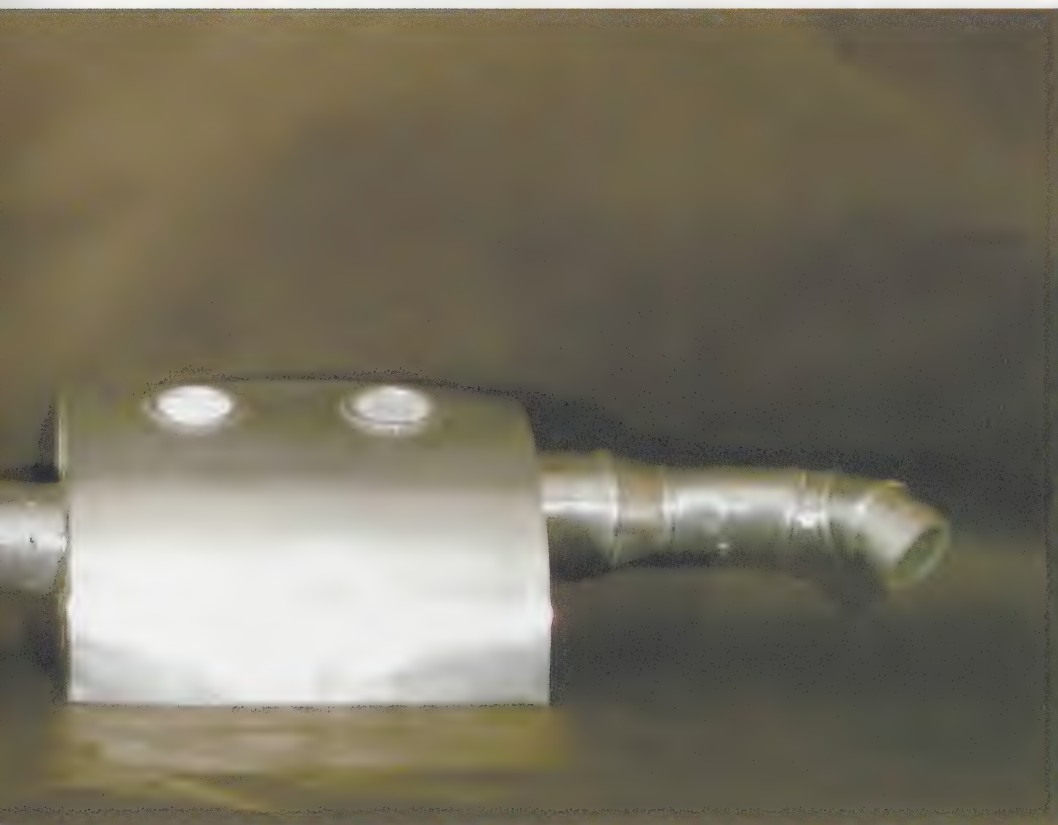
Shanna Torrez



Danielle Bash

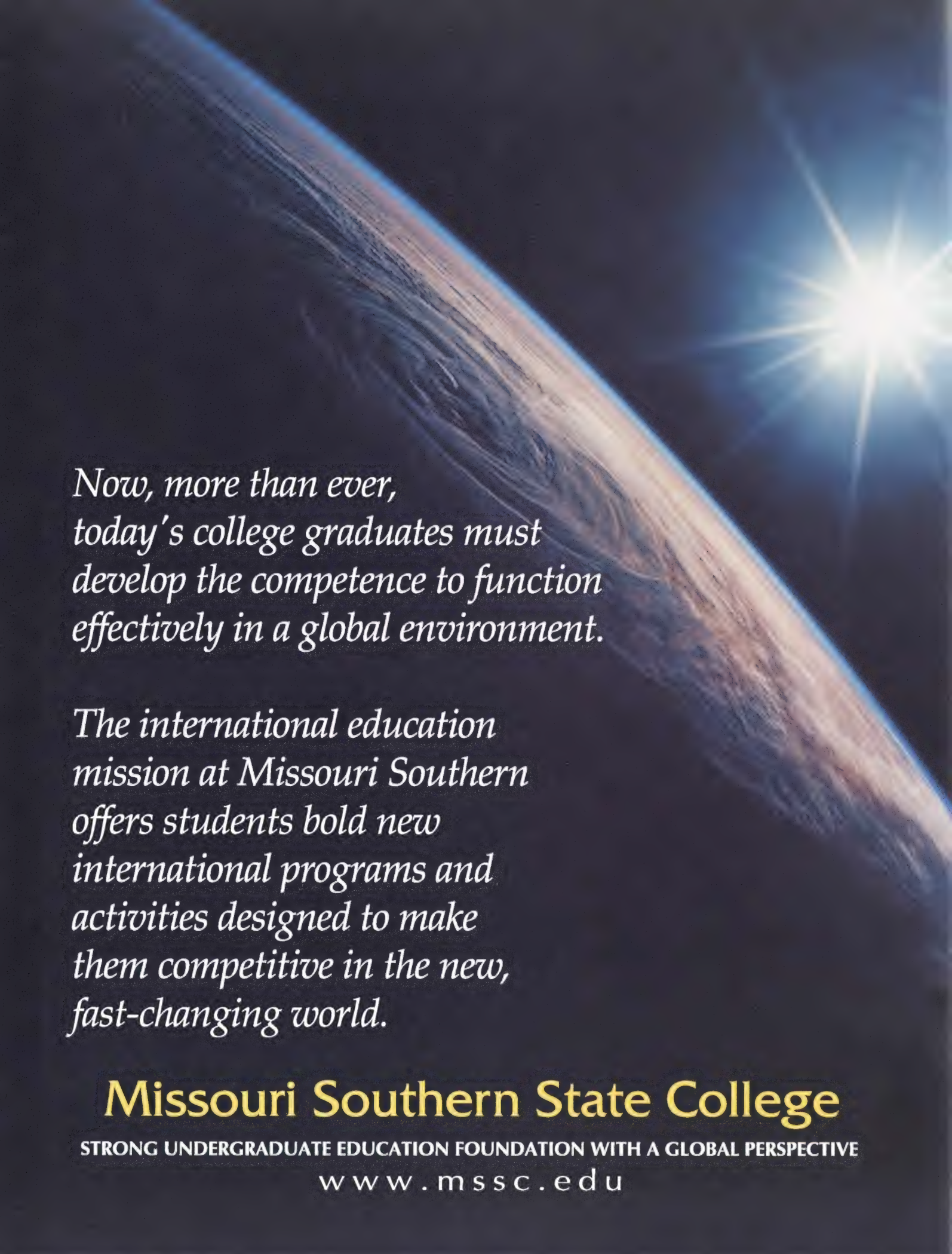


Shanna Torrez



Shanna Torrez

(Clockwise from lower left)
 Title: "Chester"
 Medium: Mixed media;
 Title: "The Spark"
 Medium: Mixed media;
 Title: "Ivan the Grump"
 Medium: Mixed media;
 Andy McCormick and "Rae,"
 a ceramic creation;
 Title: "Pain II"
 Medium: Mixed media



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Dale Benfield, Jr.

A Long-Acting Tradition



Submitted Photo

(Top) Checkerboard tiles beckon patrons into the current location of Joplin Little Theatre at 3008 W. First St.

(Above) The final curtain call of *The Women* takes place at the Royal Heights Playhouse in 1941. The Playhouse was the first building used for JLT performances in 1938. The theatre later closed its doors in June 1942 because of World War II.

A Joplin mainstay has had an ongoing tradition for more than 60 years.

"It all started with a group of amateur actors who got together and liked putting on productions, and they incorporated as Joplin Little Theatre in 1939," said Cecie Fritz, president of the board of directors. "It's the oldest continuous theatre west of the Mississippi."

Royal Heights Playhouse, 2201 Florida, was the first building the troupe occupied in 1938. In June 1942, the theatre closed its doors because of World War II, but the theatre directors and actors put on a number of shows at Camp Crowder for the troops.

In November 1946, the theatre group purchased a horse barn once used as a riding academy. This group of amateur thespians turned the structure into a theatre, which is the current center of JLT.

Construction for additions to the old horse barn began in 1990, which consisted

of enlarging the lobby floor; adding wings which housed a canteen, boardroom, and office space; enlarging the stage area; and adding a second floor for equipment use.

Reroofing of the main structure completed the new look, along with new seats and a modern light and sound booth.

Over the years, JLT has produced more than 300 productions. The group usually conducts six productions a year. A director, actors, designers, and technical crew comprise the staff of each play. Shawn Irish is a freelance designer who has worked behind the scenes of JLT for 16 years.

"There are very few opportunities to see live theatre in this area, and Joplin Little Theatre has a really good reputation," Irish said. "In the last 10 years, the scenery, lighting, and costumes have all improved. We've started to raise the level of our scenery."

Irish graduated from Missouri Southern with a degree in theatre. He devotes much of his time to theatre, and has designed the lighting and scenery for more than 40 productions.

"You do it because you love it," Irish said. "You get tired of it, but once you see a show come together the way you pictured it in

your head, then you do it again."

Stephanie Belt, a Southern senior theatre major, has been involved with JLT for about six years.

"I was into theatre in high school, and over the summer I signed up for the technical crew at Joplin Little Theatre," Belt said.

"Since then, I've worked on about five or six other productions, and I usually work backstage in the summer musicals."

The summer show is often geared toward children.

It's a production that they like to see and can also act in. This play is one of the

fund-raisers JLT does every year.

"All the funding of the shows comes from membership fees, contributions, and various fund-raisers," Fritz said.

One aspect about live theatre is it opens people's imaginations.

"You don't want to show everything in a production," Fritz said. "I think that's such a mistake that is made in television shows and movies. They show everything and there's no imagination."

JLT's tradition has influenced many people in this area.

"The best thing about it is that it's been around for such a long time," Belt said. "A lot of people started going there as children, and they're still attending productions years down the road when they're a lot older."

The secret to JLT's longevity may be in the people who realize its uniqueness and tradition.

"I love this theatre," Fritz said. "When you think of people getting together and starting from nothing, they just have an idea and they put it together."

"The fact that from that little group of people this has kept going for this long is amazing."



Dale Benfield, Jr.



Submitted Photo

(Above) The rafters are part of the original structure, a former riding academy, which JLT purchased in 1946.

(Left) Many things have changed since JLT opened its doors, including the spelling of its name. Nationally known actor Bob Cummings, center in this May 1956 photo, is an honorary lifetime member of JLT.

Upcoming Plays for 2002

1940's Radio Hour

May 10 - 19

Driving Miss Daisy

May 28 - June 2

The Snow White Show

July 19 - 28



Noppadol Paothong



Cameron Bohannon


(Top) JLT as it appears today. The Joplin theatre group produces a number of plays each year.

(Above) From left, Greg Green as Oscar, Todd Loudis as Murray, Jim Goff as Roy, Pete Schlau as Speed, and Carey Oster as Vinnie play a game of poker during a rehearsal for *The Odd Couple*.

(Right) Oster as Vinnie and Shawn Irish as Felix rehearse their roles in *The Odd Couple*. Chet Fritz directed the play which ran March 15- 24.



Cameron Bohannon



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PLACES



PRAIRIE STATE PARK



OLD SCHOOL PROSPERS



SQUAW CREEK



AN ECLECTIC SELECTION

Prairie State Park

Landmark offers
wildlife, camping.

By Cameron Bohannon

Genesis 1 teaches that since Earth's conception, mankind has been the appointed caretaker of its surrounding environment. The Cherokees believed everything on the earth was as sacred and valuable as human life.

Nature has been the inspiration for countless poems, paintings, and philosophies, yet each day it seems there is a bit less of these natural wonders than the day before.

As mankind continues to make efforts in further development, the natural beauty once covering the entire planet continues to disappear.

For better or worse, it is because of this that a place such as Missouri's Prairie State Park is pleasantly unusual. The 3,500 acres of natural prairie represent Missouri's last remnant of a

landscape which once comprised more than one-third of the state's land.

The park, open to visitors year round, is home to unique prairie grasses, elk, deer, prairie chickens, bison, and other wildlife. Visitors may take advantage of the park's hiking trails, watch wildlife, tour the visitor's center, and camp underneath the stars.

Cody White, junior English major at Missouri Southern, visits Prairie State Park about once a month.

"I go there because it's far away from everything and everyone else," White said. "It's kind of a relic. There used to be a lot more prairie land, until we came in with our flocks and fences and guns and stomped it out."

White goes to the prairie when he wants to take time away from



Bison roam freely in Prairie State Park. The wandering herds graze on the park's natural prairie grasses.



Noppadol Paothong

his normal daily life to think and appreciate nature. He said spending time there helps him gain more of an intellectual perspective on life.

"The prairie opens you up," White said. "I find it easier to wrap my brain around things and to convey ideas to people when I'm out there."

White enjoys camping at the park and waking up to the serene beauty of the mornings.

"I guarantee if you get up at sunrise, you'll see a bird on a fence, a rabbit in the hedge, a deer near the side of the road, and a bison in the distance," White said.

Actually, he once encountered some bison at a less than comfortable distance while hiking through the prairie one night with a friend. When their flashlight quit working and they had only the light of the stars to walk by, White and his friend unwittingly ended up in the middle of a bison herd.

"We heard a mighty rumble," White said, "and a shape which first appeared to be a hill in the distance turned out to be a bison."



Cameron Bohannon



Noppadol Paothong

(Top) An abundance of white tail deer use the prairie as a refuge. **(Above Left)** Cody White, junior English major, frequently visits Prairie State Park. **(Above Right)** Bison adapt well to the park's open landscape. The park is located near Mindenmines, about 40 miles north of Joplin.



Noppadol Paothong



Cameron Bohannon

"It was pretty scary. We were almost trampled to death."

Fortunately for White, he and his friend escaped unharmed, and White still goes to enjoy the prairie. He appreciates the prairie because it's the only place he knows of to see free-roaming bison in their natural habitat.

With society continually constructing new highways, strip malls, and subdivisions, it's hard not to fear that places like Prairie State Park may no longer exist in a few years.

"It's sort of a tragic thing about human nature, that we don't appreciate something until we've destroyed it," White said.

White hopes the park will remain intact for many years to come.

Cyndi Evans, park naturalist, said people visit the park to enjoy the open air, view wild bison, and see the many different grassland birds found there.

Though efforts are being made to reproduce prairie land throughout Prairie State Park, she said it is a long and difficult process.

"With 200 to 300 varieties of native prairie grasses, it's very hard, particularly on a large scale, to reproduce," Evans said.

Prairie State Park offers a chance for visitors to take a short break from the bombardment of development surrounding them every day and enjoy the natural world's splendor.

(Top) A white tail deer and yearling remain alert in the early morning hours at the park.

(Above) Visitors of all ages enjoy the activities offered at Prairie State Park including hiking, swimming, and camping.

(Right) As bison demeanor is unpredictable, numerous signs warn visitors to keep away from the range bovine.



Old School

School house takes role as bed and breakfast.

Photo Layout and Story by Shanna Torrez

Ever think back to yesteryear — back when the highlight of the day was recess?

A recent renovation offers the chance to return to those school days. Roy and Pam Whyte transformed a vacated schoolhouse, built in 1907 and closed in 1962, into an elaborate bed and breakfast.

Located on Prosperity Road south of HH Highway, the Prosperity School Bed and Breakfast, a small piece of the education system, has been turned into an eloquent getaway. The couple bought the school building in 1998 and spent 20 months and

countless dollars on the renovation process.

The Whytes kept many of the school's characteristics intact. The classrooms were transformed into four rooms for a trip down memory lane. These rooms, even still, contain the chalkboard rails and are graced with the names of the teachers who once taught there. In the former auditorium, the stage remains, but there will be no assemblies here. Now, the stage forms the centerpiece of the wedding suite.

This schoolhouse provides everything to relive those old school days — minus the principal and paddle.



Submitted Photo

(Above) Prosperity School before its renovation.

(Right) Prosperity School Bed & Breakfast, after its renovation. The former school now attracts visitors for a different kind of back-to-school night.



Shanna Torrez

Prosperes



Submitted Photo

(Above and Right) Early renovation work inside the Prosperity School Bed & Breakfast.



Submitted Photo



Shanna Torrez

The living area, above, and the "Rose Saxton" Wedding Suite, right, provide an eloquent getaway experience.



Shanna Torrez



Submitted Photo



Submitted Photo

(Above) Roy and Pam Whyte celebrate the opening day of the Prosperity School Bed & Breakfast with a red ribbon cutting. The couple spent 20 months renovating the former school.
(Left) Outside renovation.
(Right) Kitchen renovation.



Submitted Photo

The 'Class' Rooms of Prosperity School Bed & Breakfast



Shanna Torrez

The "Pink Saxton" room, above, and the "Pansy Smith" room, right, provide new comfort for sleeping in class.



Shanna Torrez

Squaw Creek

National
Wildlife
Refuge:
Home
Away
From
Home

Story and Photography
by Dale Benfield, Jr.



“It is one of the most intriguing, natural events that I have ever witnessed, an experience in both sight and sound...”

Few people in Missouri ever witness 400,000 snow geese covering the surface area of a pond in Squaw Creek.

Located five miles outside of Mound City, in the northwest corner of Missouri, the 7,178 acres of Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge hosts many migratory birds.

Depending on the weather, December is usually the best time to see the snow geese.

Robert Falls, a full-time professional wildlife and nature photographer, commented on the structure of the park and behavioral patterns of the birds.

“The geese feed at dawn in nearby

fields, returning to the refuge by late morning in elongated formations of squawking birds that can often be heard before being seen,” he said. “A one-way road, 10 miles in length, circles the ponds where the blue and snow geese settle in for some rest and relaxation.”

The park also gives shelter to America’s national bird, the bald eagle.

“When an eagle flies over the flock of geese, their mild roar intensifies to a cacophonous sound and they rise off the water in a state of widespread panic, taking flight in a giant wall of birds that circles the refuge and eventually settles back in



(Left) More than 400,000 geese migrate to Squaw Creek annually.
(Top) Deer pause to look around before running into the woods.
(Right) A blue heron gazes over the lake at Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge.



place when the danger has passed," Falls said. "It is one of the most intriguing, natural events that I have ever witnessed, an experience in both sight and sound that happens periodically during the day and again just before sunset as they fly out to roost for the night."

Other birds, pelicans, great-horned and barred owls, orioles, vireos, blue herons, and indigo buntings, also inhabit the refuge. White-tailed deer and massasauga rattlesnakes comprise other wildlife.

Falls also said there is more than wildlife in the national refuge.

"Another item of interest is the loess

bluffs that line one side of the refuge," he said. "These odd hills, devoid of rock and stone, were formed of yellowish sand during the glacier periods and later crystallized, becoming covered with native prairie grasses. There is in fact much to see at Squaw Creek."

Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge is located in Holt County, about 90 miles north of Kansas City.

Directions: From Joplin, take US-71 North to I-435 North. At Exit 79, turn south onto US-159 and follow the Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge signs for a short distance.



An Eclectic Selection

Story by Tasha Jones, Photography by Noppadol Paothong

The crowd includes old, young, poor, rich, artistic, intellectual, wild, and conservative. This is the typical mix in downtown Springfield.

South Avenue, located in the middle of the mix, runs through the square and hosts some of Springfield's hottest spots for entertainment, dining, and living.

One of the venues includes Mudhouse at 323 South Avenue.

A heavy glass door serves as a portal to

bring customers off the busy streets and into the warm establishment. The smell of fresh coffee, sweet syrups, and desserts swirls throughout the room. Low-light fixtures reflect an orange hue off the faces of the diverse crowd as it sits around odd-shaped tables drinking Mudpuddles or Mocha Nuts.

Mudhouse won the "Best Coffeehouse" three times, twice with the readers of *417 Magazine* and once with the readers of the

Springfield News-Leader. The coffeehouse opened in 1999 with co-owners Rob Weislocher and Brian King serving as the brains behind the coffee beans.

"We wanted something kind of different," Weislocher said. "We wanted to complement the atmosphere."

Weislocher said the duo's personalities clicked when it came to running the business.

"I'm more of the business type and have

attracted that type of clientele," he said.

King brings most of the art to the establishment and serves as the master roaster. Weislocher agrees the variety of people who come downtown is unusual.

"It was always one of our goals to be a melting pot and for anybody to feel good here," he said. "It's funny because you'll see a group of senior citizens and a group of teenagers, then a group of Asian girls — it's really neat."

Mudhouse added a soup, salad, and sandwich menu three months after it opened shop.

"We opened it as an alternative to what there was," Weislocher said. "We feature two soups a day and green leaf salads mixed with a choice of about 12 toppings."

Mudhouse also has a pottery studio in the back with pottery displayed for sale. The pottery is handmade and thrown by King.

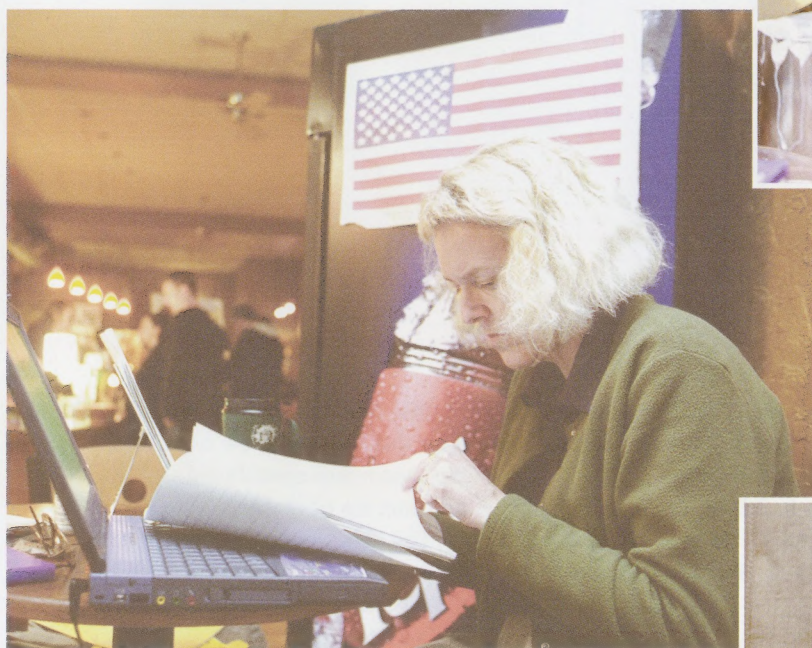
"He had a degree in art and didn't know what to do with it," Weislocher said. "He needed a venue."

Mudhouse features work from area college students and artists.

"The shows are fairly diverse, this is a senior exhibit,"



(Above) Elver Pardo, Mudhouse employee, makes a cappuccino, using West Soy milk.



(Left) Annie Anderson, Springfield, a regular customer of Mudhouse, uses her time to work on documents.

(Below) Cindy Crabtree spends her free time at Mudhouse to relax and finish some work.

Weislocher said, pointing to the art illustrations on the walls. "Next month is a senior exhibit from SMS; last month it was a local artist."

Veronica Stephenson, Missouri Southern senior dental hygiene major, is originally from Springfield. When she goes home, she makes a stop at either Nonna's Italian-American Restaurant or Mudhouse.

"The atmosphere in the Mudhouse is really relaxing," she said. "It's not wild or loud. People are very respectful to each other. There's such a variety down there and there's a ton of obscure, neat people down there that you wouldn't normally meet in school."

And as for Nonna's...

"I was introduced to it about six years ago," Stephenson





said. "We sit up in the loft because there's a skylight and it's really cool and well lit."

She liked the fact the loft allowed her to watch her food being prepared as well as watch the activities in the street.

"In one direction you can look at South Street and see what's going on that way and look at the artwork," Stephenson said. "And the other way you can see your food being made and see the chef and he actually wears a big white hat."

Located down the street from Mudhouse, past the antique stores and across from the South Side Pizza Co., is Nonna's Italian American Café, known for its reasonable prices and original menu.

Owned by Mary Faucett, the establishment has been open for more than five years.

"This is our third location," Faucett said.

"We started out in a hole-in-the-wall in '91."

After the first location, Nonna's opened

in conjunction with The Bar Next Door in 1993 before finally moving across the street to its current location.

"It's a great building; I love the character," Faucett said. "It was a dress shop when I bought it. We got it down to the shell."

"Basically, all we did was add a kitchen and some paint. We let the building speak for itself."

Faucett found starting off on South Avenue was a bit risky at first.

"When we first came down here there was a general feeling that downtown was not the place to be," she said. "The shops had all gone to the mall, but we subscribed to the theory 'if you build it, they will come.'"

Faucett said some stores have come and gone, but most of the businesses, such as the Juke Joint and the antique stores, were in existence when Nonna's came. Faucett believes her success comes from being one

of the first restaurants in the downtown area that was open all day. Also, she said the customers contributed to the commercial success of the area.

"The thing about the restaurants, all of them have a very loyal clientele," she said. "We've had good, loyal customers since we've been here."

Faucett said customers have been the "biggest boost" for the downtown area.

"Downtown is the place to go for art, theater, dining, and entertainment," she said.

Sonja Chasteen, business assistant manager for the Springfield Chamber of Commerce, has had a hand in the redevelopment of Springfield's downtown area for three and a half years.

Chasteen said the concept is to "reinvent" the downtown area with attractive green space and park space with a family effect.

Chasteen believes the emphasis of the



(Top and Facing Page) Nonna's Italian American Café, 306 South Avenue, features local artists' work and casual dining. (Above) Jeremiah Johnson has been a chef at Nonna's for four years. One speciality, Chicken Marsala, ignites the taste buds.

city needs to return to the center.

"It's the doughnut effect," she said. "What used to be the most happening place is now empty. People are moving to the outskirts. It's not a good thing for the city to let the center become dilapidated."

Chasteen said several revision and upkeep plans have been attempted for the past 20 or 30 years.

"The Vision 20/20 plan was taken by the community," she said. "A component of that plan was the revision of the downtown area."

Chasteen said the city tried everything from opening the square, closing the square, to one-way streets and two-way streets, to make it easier to go downtown.

"But people still didn't need to go down there," she said.

Springfield is now getting into the swing of things and going back to the roots of its beginnings.

"It's hopping," Chasteen said in reference to downtown Springfield today. "A lot of the kinds of businesses that attract people are on South Avenue, Walnut, and Campbell. South Avenue is one of the more successful streets of the downtown area."

Chasteen said some of the returned popularity comes from old memories when the downtown area was the thriving area of the city.

"There's an atmosphere that reminds people of the way things used to be," she said.

Chasteen also pointed out that while many businesses occupy only a building's first floor, sometimes leaving the second and third empty, most owners have decided to convert the space into apartments and lofts.

"It's a baby boomer generation that is intrigued with the idea of living downtown," she said. "The atmosphere of the whole area is more energetic, more lively — something with a little more pop. You don't have to paint the house or mow the lawn."

South Avenue Establishments

The Boogie

321 South Avenue

The Juke Joint

221 South Avenue

Maria's Mexican Foods

406 South Avenue

South Avenue Pizza Co.

305 South Avenue

The Bar Next Door

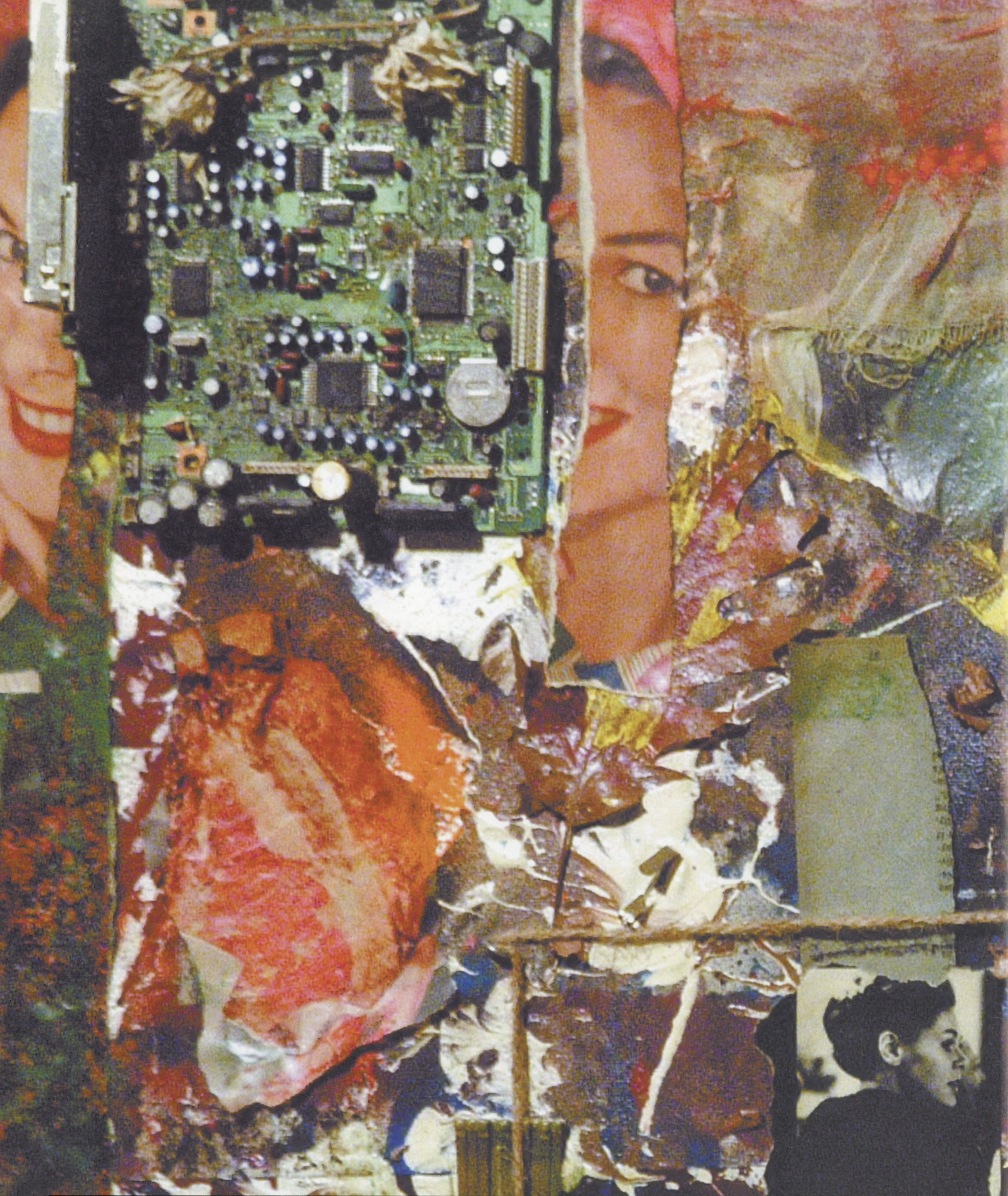
307 South Avenue

Mudhouse

323 South Avenue

Nonna's Italian American Café

306 South Avenue



Partial view of an untitled collage by Andrew McCormick. More art is featured on pages 21 - 30.